



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XVI.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1866.

No. 44.

EDWARD LYNN.

(From the Catholic Telegraph.)

CHAPTER I.—SISTER CECILIA.

‘Can it be true, Ed., that, as mother tells me, you are going to leave the dear old Church, for the superstitions of Popery?’ exclaimed Carrie Lynn, in no pleasant mood, as she entered her brother’s room the morning after his arrival.—‘Oh, Ed., it would be hard to give you up; but I doubt, if that wound of yours had proved fatal, if we could, in our hearts, suffer more than we should to see you forsake the religion, which has so long nourished you, for a lot of absurd—’

‘Not so fast, sister,’ said her brother, Capt. Lynn, who was lying on a sofa, enjoying his convalescence. ‘You know Dr. White says that all exciting conversation must, for the present, be avoided; so be careful not to overstep the limits. In a day or two we will talk over the subject; but, Sis, I have some books in my valise you might like to look over in the meantime—from them you can gain any information in regard to my belief.’

‘Books on Popery! No, indeed, Edward,’ said his sister, with much warmth. ‘I think I can spend my leisure hours to much better advantage than in perusing silly, absurd—well, to say the least, very injurious books. Then she added sadly, ‘But has it come to this? Are you quite determined?’

Her brother, evading her question, began.—‘Come, Carrie, I want to enlist your sympathy. I used to have it, and want it now.’

‘Enlist my sympathy! that is too bad, brother; as if I had no feeling for you in your misfortune,’ said the enthusiastic girl. And she tenderly kissed her brother’s forehead.

‘Yes, my pet; I know you have,’ said he, returning her caress, ‘and now, don’t let them talk to me till I get well, and then I think you will all be satisfied with my choice—at least so far as to allow me my own way in peace. Now, remember; for I don’t feel prepared to be sent to my last account just now, although you seem to think the loss would be no worse than if I became a Roman Catholic.’

‘Oh, no! I did not mean exactly that, brother Ed.; indeed, I scarcely know what I said, it took me so by surprise. But they shall not torment you, poor brother; you have suffered enough. You must have peace now, whatever pernicious sentiments you have picked up in the army; and Carrie manifested her sincerity for the wounded soldier—the ‘poor deluded boy,’ as his mother said—by a prolonged kiss, and left the room. ‘O! I forgot!’ she exclaimed, at the door, ‘here is a letter from—I know who—and I’ll accept a perusal, even though it be second-hand,’ she added mischievously.

The young man grasped the letter eagerly;—and, noting the page, laid aside the book which had engaged his attention previous to his sister’s entrance, and opened the missive.

Edward and Carrie Lynn were the only children of a prosperous mercantile in a western town. Their lives had passed in comfort and comparative ease—though not in the ‘lap of luxury’—with intelligent and upright parents, who, while educating them in all the branches considered necessary for a liberal education, early inculcated, with the love of knowledge, the necessity of self-reliance. Accordingly, Edward, at the age of nineteen—after graduating at one of the best literary institutions in the West—entered upon the study of medicine, in which he gave fair promise to excel. He had already received his diploma, and began to think of establishing himself in some eligible location, in the practice of his profession, when the rebellion which has so desolated our once fair land broke upon us. He was among the first to rally to the defence of our country. Leaving his books, and bidding adieu to the loved ones at home, he entered the army as first Lieutenant of a company raised in their enterprising and patriotic town.—Mr. Lynn, though proud to see his son willing to risk his life for the land for which his own grand-father had died in the great Revolution, with a father’s heart regretted the parting with his only son, he, who, if spared would be the support of his parents in the decline of life.

We have become somewhat hardened, after three years of war, and its many attendant evils; but when the first call for volunteers was responded to, and fathers and brothers left their homes for the tented field, what horrid scenes of bloodshed rose up before the mind at parting, and how little we dared to hope to meet these volunteers again.

Edward tried to be firm, but found himself fast losing his power of control, when his gentle mother, in a voice broken by sobs, commended him to God; for she was an earnest, though not investigating Christian; and placing in his hand a pocket Bible, with marked passages, hurried from the room, to kneel in prayer for him, in the silence of her chamber. With Carrie—she who had grown with him like a twin spirit, who had

shared every joy, and shed tears over every disappointment of his school boy days, or affliction of later life—with her he lingered long, until the omnibus, which was to convey him to the depot, was at the door, and he heard the shouts of the brave boys who were to be his companions on many a bloody battle-field, as they had been in all his youthful festivities.

‘This parting will do us good, Carrie,’ said he, ‘it will show us how dear we are to each other, and will teach me how to appreciate my home and friends, by depriving me of them for a season.’

‘God grant it may be but for a season,’ said his father solemnly.

‘Well, father,’ said Edward, with a forced show of cheerfulness, ‘we must not anticipate evil; if it come, I will try to meet it as a soldier,’ and his voice had in it a perceptible tremor.

‘We consider you competent to judge of right and wrong, my son,’ said Mr. Lynn, ‘and therefore have placed no hindrance in the way of what you, what any patriotic citizen, must consider your duty in the hour of our country’s danger. Stand firm, Edward; never falter on the path you consider that of duty, though it lead you into unforeseen trouble and trials that you would now shrink from. The soldier’s life, my dear son, is not an easy one to any; much less to him who does his whole duty. The Lord of hosts be with you.’

The young officer checked a rising sigh, grasped his father’s hand, then hurriedly clasping his sister to his heart, went forth bravely to fight for the good old flag.

On the bloody field of Stone River, under the heroic leader Rosecrans, he stood manfully by his men; and for noble daring all through those three memorable days, he was promoted. None more deserving of promotion than he. With the few remaining members of his company he marched Southward, enduring the privations and sufferings that the brave boys of the army of the Cumberland passed through for so many weary months. He fought valiantly during the terrible slaughter of Chickamauga, and in the last hour fell with a severe wound; and his comrades carried him from the field, fearing they had lost their noble Captain. But he opened his eyes while the surgeon was dressing his wound, and breathed a prayer of thankfulness when he heard that it was not likely to prove fatal. Slowly passed the days while he lay in the uncomfortable and crowded hospital, from which, as soon as he was able, he was removed to one but little more commodious, but where he could have some of the attention our sick and wounded have so much needed. While here, he lay near to a young soldier—a stranger, so far as personal acquaintance was concerned, but in whom he recognised a brother in the common cause of the country—who attracted his attention by reciting, in rather a loud whisper, his peculiar devotions, morning and evening—a custom too uncommon among our soldiers, many of whom seem to forget that bravery alone will not ensure them an entrance into heaven, even though they should fall in defense of good and just principles.—The Lord’s Prayer was familiar to Capt. Lynn, he lisped it at his mother’s knee; but ‘Hail Mary!’ he heard for the first time, and was not quite sure that he heard aright; but the idea of calling upon the name of ‘Mary,’ ‘Mother of God,’ filled his mind with something akin to disgust. His lips curled in scorn at the ignorance and idolatrous superstitions of the poor Irishman. But as day after day he heard the same prayer repeated, and becoming able to converse, he soon learned that the soldier was not so ignorant as he supposed. Pity took the place of scorn, and he determined, if opportunity offered, to eradicate some of the pernicious sentiments which seemed to him to be the man’s religion.

Captain Lynn was one of ‘Old Ross’s’ most ardent admirers, and probably had he ever had any conversation with that General on the subject of religion, would have never formed so silly a resolution, but as military matters alone was the subject—when it was necessary he should be consulted—it is easy to imagine how the young officer was no wiser upon the subject of Gen. Rosecrans, much abused faith, after spending so many months under his command.

The sun was shining through the open window, and the pleasant south wind came in laden with the breath of woodland flowers, for Spring had returned to the Southland before the wounded Captain was able to start for home. He lay, half unconscious, upon his pillow, dreaming of father, mother, sister, and ‘another, not a sister,’ whose frank and affectionate letters made the hours of confinement pass faster than any thing else could possibly have done. Suddenly by his side stood a fair, slight form, and a cool white hand took from his burning brow the steaming linen, and replaced it with a fresh one. A woman’s hand! When was a woman in hospital? No—except poor Mrs. Eldor, who came to comfort her dying husband, and took away

with her the lifeless body; and little Fanny Crayton, who came with her father to visit a wounded brother? For a moment Capt. Lynn thought the being at his side must be the blue-eyed Fanny, who had done all in her power, during her short stay, to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and wounded, though they were not brothers. But collecting his wandering senses he remembered that she had left for her Northern home two days previous. He was almost afraid to open his eyes to look clearly upon her, lest the vision would vanish. But the touch of that hand! It was certainly tangible. Did it not yet linger where the freshly wet bandage had already cooled his throbbing temples? And then a voice, it might have been his sister’s, so softly did it fall upon an ear made nervously acute by sickness, asked:

‘Will you have a cool drink?’ and the same hand—white and delicate he knew it to be before he opened his eyes to look upon it—lifted the glass of water just brought from the spring beyond the hospital.

Was it the beauty of the morning, or his pleasant dream of home, or his angel visitant, that made the hours fly faster than for many, many weeks? Perhaps each had a share in giving pleasure to the convalescent officer, and added to this the surgeon to charge had told him that if he continued to improve, he would in a few days be able to start for home. All the morning the form in the sober black dress—the singularity of which had made him doubt his awakened senses, (and at last gave him an idea of her character)—ministered to the wants of those around him. Every eye grew brighter at her approach, and some sad ones smiled, for the first time since entering there, as her cheering words fell upon the ear. His neighbor, who had so interested him by his ‘Pater and Ave,’ detained her to ask if she would be so kind as to write a letter for him to the old country. The brave fellow had suffered amputation of his right arm, besides having several other wounds.—Having received an affirmative reply, he prayed all the blessings of heaven to rain down upon her in his peculiar way. The Captain listened, in some amusement, to his harangue, and wondered that the lady would patiently hear it, and even give him a gracious smile and ‘thank you’ for his nonsense.

‘Do you know her?’ he asked, as she moved away.

‘Sure an’ I do, Captain; isn’t she one of the Sisters—the sweet creatures—who are spendin’ all their precious lives, takin’ care of the souls of us poor wretches? And all for the love of God! Sure, I know her, though never a word did I speak to the lady before this minute.’

And so young Lynn began to muse; it was true, then, as he had surmised, that he had conversed that morning with a nun—a real nun, one of those wonderful and much abused women who are shut up in cloisters dim, and pine away for want of the society of their fellow-beings, and die, perhaps—for who ever knew what became of them after entering the gloomy convent cells, another name for a living tomb! Such was the idea of a nun, entertained by him and thousands of others. But this one—she was not what he had believed a nun to be, or why was she there? Could it be, and he smiled at the absurdity of the idea, through motives of disinterested charity, purely for the love of God, as his neighbor had expressed it? Thus he thought and wondered, as he lay with his eyes fixed upon her, as she moved silently around, and asked himself questions which had never before perplexed his brain, and which he could not answer; but the poorest intellect which has had its training in the holy Mother Church would probably find no difficulty in solving them.

‘Well, Captain, how do you like your new nurse?’ Knows how to perform her duties more to your refined taste than our rough men, don’t she?’ asked the surgeon as he came on his usual round. ‘You see, we sent for the Sisters, who have accomplished a great deal in other hospitals and three arrived at this point last night. I tell you, Captain, one of them will do you more good than three doctors.’

‘Catholics, I believe,’ mildly suggested his patient.

‘Of course!’ answered the surgeon, heedless of the half scornful expression accompanying the low spoken words. ‘And I tell you, if anything could turn my head—too old to change religion now—it would be the example of these unpretending women. You’ll get better fast,’ and the doctor went on to praise Sister Cecilia to the next patient.

the news from some fellow officers, and to look upon the Southern woods, already arrayed in gorgeous beauty, before he should leave for the bare brown fields and leafless woods, where the March winds were rustling the dead leaves, and scattering the last year’s deserted bird’s nests.—‘The forests of Tennessee were alive with winged songsters, and the fragrant air full of their melodies, each singing a matin hymn to their Preserver. And his heart too sent up a prayer of thanksgiving that his life had been spared while so many had fallen around. ‘What,’ he asked himself, ‘have I ever done to deserve such mercy? Have I ever accomplished anything for the love of God?’ And now rose up before him the image of ‘Sister Cecilia’ and ‘Sister Agnes,’ performing their mission of love in the warm and unhealthy atmosphere of the hospital, mastering to bodily disease, and speaking kind and cheering words to the depressed in spirit; sitting all night, after a fatiguing day, by the side of some sufferer, that death might not find him alone; writing letters to absent friends; closing the eyes of the dead; or cutting off a lock of sunny hair from over a boyish brow, to save for whoever should come to claim his body, or to send to a sorrowing mother. All this was heroic, such as he had never seen equalled, and never before had believed possible for a fragile woman. He wished to think of himself, of his plans for the future, when his weak limbs should become strong, and the pain, sometimes still fearfully intense, should leave his head; but, do what he would to banish them, thoughts of the Sisters of Charity would intrude upon him, and the words of the Irish soldier, which contained an idea almost novel to him, would startle his mind into inquiry upon a subject entirely unthought of a week before.

‘Their’s must be, at least to them,’ he said, musingly, ‘a beautiful and pure belief; not what I have considered the Roman Catholic faith to be. Can it be that I have been deceived—that I have been prejudiced against that of which I know nothing?’

And when a single doubt arose, the whole structure of his false prejudices loomed up before his vision, tottering at its very foundation. These prejudices had been instilled into his mind at home, at Sunday school, at College, and in society, and he had some he could not account for. They had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. He had always been ready to assail what he called ‘the absurdities of Popery.’ And truly might Catholicism be called one grand system of absurdities, if it is what thousands have from their infancy been taught to believe it. Capt. Lynn walked slowly on, regardless of distance, revolving in his mind the new ideas that were in a rather chaotic state of existence in his confused brain. His wounded limb was becoming painful, and he seated himself on a log, with the intention of returning to the hospital in a few minutes, when who should make his appearance but his Irish friend.

‘Good morning, Mike,’ said Lynn, with that easy familiarity which won the hearts of his men. ‘So you, too, are out enjoying the beauty of the morning?’

‘Good morning, Captain,’ answered Mike, doffing his beaver, ‘It’s glad I am, sure, to see ye able to be out this fine day, Sir; and, thanks be to God, that myself can enjoy the day.’

‘So you, too, seem to be in a moralizing humor,’ said the Captain, smiling. ‘Yes, our thanks are due to God, but seldom do we find those who give much thought to his goodness. I have concluded that they who render Him thanks, in sincerity of heart, are few, very few, if found at all.’

‘Captain, do ye doubt the sincerity of them Sisters yonder?’ ask Mike, nodding in the direction of the hospital.

‘I am not prepared to say, Mike,’ was the candid reply to this pointed question. ‘I very much admire their fortitude and self-denial, nor can I ever forget their kindness to me—a stranger—but—’ the usually self-possessed man was becoming embarrassed under the scrutinizing gaze of the honest Hibernian, ‘but, Mike, do you really believe that it is for the love of God?’

‘Is it yourself that can be doubting the holy Sisters? God bless ‘em!’ said Mike earnestly. ‘But, Captain, I think the walk has been too much for you—you are as white as a sheet.’

His wound had begun to bleed afresh, and it was with much difficulty that they bound it up with their handkerchiefs until assistance could be procured. Mike, forgetful for the moment of his own feeble limbs, ran with all possible haste and despatched two attendants for the now helpless officer, who settled down in bed again, mentally cursing his thoughtlessness, and dismissing all thoughts of returning home for the present.—The surgeon looked grave, and examined his patient, with a severe reprimand for not attending more strictly to his injunctions.

‘Confound it, man! I might have known as much. Ought not to have let you out of my sight, till safe in your father’s care. Well, experience is a dear school,’ young man, ‘but—you know the rest.’

The doctor’s indignation soon subsided, however, for he really sympathized in the misfortune of his young friend, to whom he had become warmly attached; not only considering him worthy of esteem, as a friend, but a man of talents and rare promise in the profession he had chosen. The greatest fault the doctor usually found with him was that of entering the service in any other than as surgeon, while so many were needed. Captain Lynn seemed to think less of his new affliction than did his comrades and attendants. The generous Irishman was obliged to keep his bed for two days, and it was with a heart full of gratitude that the Captain tried to express his thanks for the timely assistance which had probably saved his life. Inflammation setting in, he became much worse. For two weeks he hovered between life and death, and but little hope was entertained that he would ever reach his father’s house alive. In the meantime his father received intelligence that his son would, upon a certain day be at the station, and went thither to meet him, but was doomed to a bitter disappointment. On returning home, he found a telegram, briefly informing the grief-stricken circle that Captain Lynn was dangerously ill. No time was to be lost, so taking with him the skilful family physician he set out for the scene of battles.

Dr. White had been the preceptor of Edward Lynn, and was deeply interested in him. Not only was he proud of him as being a student of remarkable talent and promise, but having no sons, he seemed to live upon him all the love he might have bestowed upon one, if it had been the will of the Almighty to have given him a son. He had three daughters, pleasant accomplished girls, who were intimate friends of Edward and Carrie Lynn, a were the parents; and it had for years been a serious, scarcely acknowledged, wish of the doctor that his youngest daughter—yet much too young to think of matrimony—and his student might, at some future day, make a happy marriage the connecting link between the families. But he wisely forbore mentioning to any one, much less to his pretty gifted child, his cherished plan for her happiness.

All the attention that could be bestowed upon the invalid, in a Southern hospital, was lavished upon Captain Lynn. In his delirium he called Sister Cecilia, Carrie, and would scarcely allow her to leave his bedside—while he was constantly calling upon her to pray for him. And she did pray as only those pious devoted women can pray, who have left the world’s allurements to minister to distress; who visit the haunts of wretchedness, and even crime, with no hope of earthly reward, with only the hope of saving souls, for whom our blessed Redeemer died.

‘Did you forget to pray for me, Carrie?’ he would ask as the Sister made her appearance with the first streak of dawn. ‘Don’t you know the Lord has sent for me,’ he would sometimes add, ‘and I can’t go—I can’t go this way. You must pray for me.’

‘Oh, no, I never forgot to pray for you,’ she would reply, ‘but you have been dreaming; you will soon be better.’

‘I am well enough, bodily,’ he often said, but I want you to pray for my soul. It is sick; not my body. What are the doctors here for? I don’t want them: I only want Carrie, and I want her to pray.’

At last the light of reason dawned upon his mind, and he rapidly regained his strength. Was it the triumph of a naturally strong constitution, combined with excellent medical aid, as his father and friends believed, or of Sister Cecilia’s prayers, as he believed it to be? Who shall tell, until the record be unrolled, and the heroic deeds of humble women made known to the vast multitudes who shall come from the East and West, from the North and South, on the great day when the King of kings shall come forth in his chariot of fire? Old Mr. Lynn’s gratitude to one who had done so much for his son, was naturally very great, but as for the motive which actuated the heroic woman, he ascribed it to a desire to proselytize, though he forebore expressing his opinion through politeness for her and respect for his son. He presented her with a very liberal donation, though assured by her that every cent would be expended in alleviating suffering; and thus ended his sense of obligation. But a far richer gift nestled down in Sister Cecilia’s heart; the knowledge of having done a deed of mercy. And another gem was added to the diadem preparing for her brow by him for whom she had severed all earthly ties—and in the Lamb’s Book of Life was written another page to testify to her works of love, when the ‘Books shall be opened.’

‘Sister Cecilia,’ said Captain Lynn, one day when his father had left her alone at his bedside,